(c) **Fencing.**

Fencing.

80. The erection of hedges was carried out as usual with the aid of the forest population in consideration of the privileges enjoyed by them. The amount of work turned out free of cost through this agency is tabulated below :—

Division.	Length of hedges in miles.	Estimated value.
		Rs.
Sukkur ...	270	4,538
Naushahro ...	17	380
Hyderabad ...	166	424
Jerruck ...	92	1,322
Total ...	545	6,664

(c) *Improvement of Forest growth.*

(1) *Natural Reproduction.*

Natural reproduction.

81. As it was to be expected in a year of normal inundation, natural reproduction as a whole, whether by seed or by coppice, was plentiful in all the riverain forests which are not completely cut off by protective embankments erected by the Irrigation Department, or which are not high-lying. In fact, it was what may be termed a "model" season, the level to which the floods reached being neither too high nor too low, and, combined also, as it was, with effective protection from fires and injurious grazing, it resulted in the general improvement of the growth. Unfortunately, the very heavy frosts of the year did some irreparable damage, chiefly in Upper and Central Sind, not only to the self-sown babul seedlings of the year, but to older growth of the same species as well. * The frost was so severe in some localities that branches of mature trees exposed to its influence completely dried up and withered away. The injury was confined to the young crop of babul seedlings which were in the open and not under parent or other trees, although in a few instances it was noticed that the young growth even in open ground had escaped damage. The majority of the seedlings which suffered and were nipped to the ground made a fresh start in the spring, and are reported to be doing well. In high-lying lands beyond the influence of the floods, natural reproduction by seed was almost a *minus* quantity, as the rainfall of the Province, scanty as it is, was much more deficient than in ordinary years. In such of the unirrigated forests as were closed to browsers, the coppice growth showed a marked improvement.

82. The character of the inundation of 1896 as compared with that of the previous year, and its consequent effect on the forests, will be gathered from the details given below :—

Division.	Total area of Division.	AREA IRRIGATED DURING THE INUNDATION SEASON OF		Area capable of being irrigated in abnormal inundations.
		1895.	1896.	
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Sukkur ...	287,718	84,700	121,455	212,000
Naushahro ...	156,800	15,000	34,659	88,800
Hyderabad ...	118,977	60,000	50,657	100,000
Jerruck ...	117,466	47,000	88,500	95,000
Total ...	680,961	206,700	295,271	495,800

* *Note.*—The temperature at night and in the early mornings between the 14th and 24th January was very low, the thermometer having registered from 6 to 14 degrees of frost.